

Standards of Accreditation Chapter 55

Tentative Changes for Consideration Suggested by Alternative to Standard Subcommittee

10.55.604 VARIANCE TO STANDARDS

(1) A school district may apply to the board of public education through the superintendent of public instruction to implement an alternative to a standard or a section of standards, excluding standards stating statutory criteria, standards pertaining to teacher licensure or endorsement, and content and performance standards as defined by the board of public education and provided in guidance from the superintendent of public instruction.

(a) In its application, a school district shall outline how and why it believes its proposed alternative would be workable, educationally sound, and designed to meet or exceed results under established standards and, where applicable, align with program standards 10.55.1101 – 1901.

(b) In its application, a school district shall provide evidence through official minutes of the Board of Trustees that local school community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of its proposed alternative and shall include the signature of any individuals that are in support of the proposal.

(c) Stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers, classified school staff, parents, community members, and students as applicable.

(d) A district shall provide evidence that it adopted its application for an alternative at an official, properly noticed meeting of its board of trustees.

(e) An application for an alternative is due in writing to the superintendent no later than the first Monday in March of the year preceding the academic year in which an alternative would be implemented.

(f) Upon receipt the superintendent shall refer applications for alternative standards to a pre-appointed review board. The Office of Public Instruction shall facilitate and provide organizational support for the meetings of the review board.

(g) The review board shall consist of the following, appointed by the Superintendent from a list of qualifying individuals jointly endorsed by MEA-MFT, MREA, MSSA, MTSBA and SAM:

- 1 trustees
- 1 superintendent
- 1 high school principal
- 1 elementary principal
- 2 high school teachers
- 2 elementary teachers



(i) The core committee above shall appoint additional temporary subject matter experts covering the specific subject matter that is covered by the alternative proposal, as follows:

- 1 principal licensed at the grade level(s) covered by the alternative
- 1 teacher licensed and endorsed in the subject matter and/or at the grade level covered by the alternative.

(ii) the core committee and temporary subject matter experts shall serve 5 year terms with no limit to the number of terms any one person may serve. Terms shall be staggered where half of all positions shall be filled every three years prior to the first meeting of committee in the third year.

(h) The review board shall review all applications and use a uniform rubric, made available to districts in advance of applying to implement an alternative to a standard or section of standards. The uniform rubric will ensure consistent and high quality applications from school districts across Montana. The review board shall provide their recommendations to the superintendent and board of public education.

(i) The superintendent shall provide the board of public education with a recommendation for approval, modification or rejection of the review board's recommendation.

(j) If the superintendent or review board finds an application to be preliminarily deficient, the superintendent shall advise the applicant school district why that application is not ready for consideration.

(k) The applicant district shall have the opportunity to change its application as suggested or submit it as originally proposed.

Board of Public Education

(2) The board of public education shall approve or deny proposed alternatives to standards.

(a) If the board denies a proposed alternative to standards, it shall remit in writing to the applicant school district why it has done so.

(b) If the board approves a proposed alternative to standards, it shall initially do so for no more than two (2) years pending ongoing review of the implementation by the superintendent of public instruction.

(c) Following the second year of implementation of an alternative to standards, the school district shall provide evidence to the superintendent that the methods selected by the district to implement meet or exceed results that could have been achieved under established standards.

(d) If the superintendent finds the alternative is workable and educationally sound, the superintendent shall report findings and recommend continued approval to the board of public education.



(f) If the board concurs with the superintendent's recommendation, it may renew the alternative for no more than three years.

(g) The board may subsequently renew the alternative provide the district continues to show how the alternative meets or exceeds established standards.

(h) If the superintendent finds the alternative is not working as intended and does not meet or exceed results that could be achieved under established standards, the superintendent shall recommend to the board of public education that the alternative be abandoned.

(i) If the board accepts the superintendent's recommendation to abandon an alternative, its decision is final.

(j) A school district may discontinue an approved alternative at any time. If it does so, it shall promptly notify the superintendent and board of public education in writing.

